CRITICAL DIGEST

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The Weekly Newsletter Digest of the Current NYC & LA Entertainment Scene
25¢ per copy...$10 per year...505-5th Ave,NYC...MU 2-0326.T M Kraus,Editor

Camino Real-National 3/19/53. Controversial,split verdict filed by daily NYC drama reviewers on Tennessee Williams new play,staged by Elia Kazan and presented by Cheryl Crawford, Ethel Reiner and Walter P Chrysler,Jr. News, Herald Tribune,Post and Journal American critics filed outright cons,mostly because they thought no matter what the playwright was trying to do,he failed. The other critics gave him the benefit of a great amount of doubt in what the play meant, but they found enough important in it to recommend show for the serious theatre fan. Eli Wallach, Jo Van Fleet,Joseph Anthony,Frank Silvera, Barbara Baxley and Jennie Goldstein were praised by latter critics,while former mostly ignored them in coverage. Atkinson,Times,admitted that Williams' version of the truth about human destiny is both horrifying and pathetic,but taken as theatre it is as eloquent and rhythmic as a piece of music,with some superb performances and a superb production. Script will delight the few,amaze the many predicts Coleman,Mirror. Play is type of adventure that gives to spectator as much as he brings to it,he added. Hawkins, World Telegram & Sun, lauded play as a brillant and rictous adventure which succeeds in making tangible for all your senses the delirious pains and ecstasy of a wild dream. Conception of production is inspired,execution exciting to such a degree,critic believes,that there is no question of not liking it, but only of just how you personally will appen to enjoy and find yourself stirred by it. Scheaffer, Eagle,found it almost continuously interesting, much of it uncommonly absorbing,richly and boldly theatrical.

Con side headed by Kerr,Herald Tribune,who marked it off as the worst play yet written by the best playwright of his generation. Eccentric,highly cerebral and always self consciously poetic stew never lets the magic show up,reviewer fears. Compared with this script Wilder's The Skin of Our Teeth was as simply as Potash and Perlmutter,sums up Chapman,News. Watts,Post,settled for term "enigmatic bore" to convey his negative feelings. Playwright,he adds,was successful in making his new work obscure and maddeningly self conscious. McClain,Journal American,panned it because author knocked himself out being oblique instead of writing a theatre piece.

Porgy & Bess-Ziegfeld 3/9/53 Weekly reviews filed so far all agree with the unanimous decision of their daily colleagues that Robert Breen-Blevins Davis version of Gershwin-Heyward American folk opera classic. Gibbs,New Yorker,found it just about the most exciting thing in NY. His minor complaint was that revival had a little too much melodramatic emphasis here and there. Time man enjoyed proceedings,though he thought at times it becomes a bit too sprawling and noisy for musicomedy. Vene,Variety,rated it as colorful,melodic and marked by topnatch performances and vocalizing. Leontyne Price and Leslie Scott in title roles were cheered by all,as was Cab Calloway. Cue critic thought latter would have run away with show if the others weren't as superb as they are. As for other minor criticisms the Cue editor noted that anyone who would take the trouble of making minor points now would probably pull the wings off flies. New Yorker critic voiced thought that even management was slightly confused by its method of announcing which of 3 alternates were playing the title roles.

' Danny Kaye Meets Drama Desk '

Reporters ask questions,not answer them. Danny Kaye, guest of "Drama Desk,"NY Theatre editors and reporters organization found this out when he wondered aloud why he was more nervous performing for such a small group than he is working before a large audience. Newsmen could not come up with an answer to satisfy the star.

Kaye, currently at RKO Palace,detailed his opinions on his own success to the group. Sammy Prager, his accompaniest,was also a guest. Sol Schwartz, RKO Theatre president,and Wm. Howard, RKO Theatre general manager,headed a delegation of theatre executives present.

Audiences are the same the world over, Kaye explained, once you scrape the veneer. English audience at Palladium was no more responsive than any other, but certain reasons combined into making him such a hit in London.

National papers read throughout England,plus imaginative American press agents were two of main reasons the star named. Also important is fact that US humor is more international than British humor. Finally,he added, vaudeville is flourishing in England, while it is a lost art here.

The original idea for the "Two-A Day"revival at the Palace,which is really 8 performances a week, originated with Kaye, Schw artz revealed. Several years before the first Judy Garland appearance Ka ye approached the theatre chain management with the suggestion. At the time a deal couldn't be arranged. When the house was ready, Kaye was busy with other committments.

Present plans call for him to play through mid-April at the NY theatre, though he is willing to play through the summer. Date of his next picture is the deciding factor,he noted. Schwartz,speaking for management,wished Kaye could stay for at least a year. Theatre president said that newspaper columnists guessing who would follow Kaye at Palace were all wrong,because no discussions are now in progress.

Recalling a magazine article by Kerr,Herald Tribune,chiding him for leaving "stage" for films and work aborad, Kaye reminded theatre writers that the "stage" is not confined to a few Broadway houses. To him "stage" is where ever his audience is,and he has played to audiences around the world. Somehow the star feels he has kept in form better tailoring his act to each audience, than he might have if forced to repeat a playwright's words nightly. In this continous process of changing his routine,Kaye admitted that he will try anything that comes into his head while onstage. The first time a certain piece is done, he goes further than his audience will allow. But this is done to see just how far he can go in the future.

Kaye concluded by singing favorites of the w riters. These included "Triplets," "Anatole of Paris," and "London Fog."

' NEW WEEKLY FEATURE IN CD '

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Theatre album records, classical records and jazz records coverage has been added to "Critical Digest" starting with the current issue. Digests of reviews of NYC & LA newspapers and weekly magazines will be covered.

' Green Room Department '

PLAYWRIGHT PROSPECTS...If US theatre had to fall back on the veteran writers, things would be fairly dismal,complains Watts,Post. We must be grateful that post war crop including Arthur Miller and William Inge is as interesting as it is...Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller,concludes Howes, Saturday Review. The rest remain in a kind of theatre purgatory where the conditions militate against their ever accomplishing the best that is in them. High production costs,competition of other media 2 main causes.

REVIVAL IDEAS...Producers wondering what to do next might get many ideas from batch of suggestions Coleman,Mirror,has received. They include: Road to Rome, Under Two Flags, Chu Chin Chow, The Desert Song. The Masque of Kings, The Student Prince, Oedipus Rex, The Voice of the Turtle. Sunny, A Mirror reader wishes some playwright would do a play depicting the life of George Washington, giving in it as many actual speeches as could be worked in.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS...Now that special interest groups have started to complain Sheaffer,Eagle, warns producers of My Three Angels will surely hear from Sing Sing prison alumni about the convicts who cheerfully commit murder... Watts,Post,admits that the quality of cocksureness in criticism doesn't usually annoy him,because he possesses some himself. But the extent of that quality in Bebtley,New Republic,"In Search of Theatre" makes reading it impossible.

JR LABOR PROBLEMS...Jenny Hecht, 9 year old daughter of Ben Hecht, has been dismissed from the cast of Mid-Summer by Actors Equity. On March 31 she will be tried before Council on charges brought against her by other members of the cast. She has been replaced by Ellen Barry. Union rules forbid Equity members to discuss the cast, but Kempton,Post, talked over the dispute with the youngster's father. Playwright believes older members of cast are peeved because Jenny and Geraldine Page won top mention in the reviews and recent picture publicity. Headline to Kempton's column,which may give clue to charges was "Jenny Kicked Me."

BEST BETS...Tony Awards, official opening of Award Giving Season, Chapman, News, thinks Geraldine Page,Mid Summer, and Victor Moore,On Borrowed Time deserve the top titles here. As for best musical score, Leonard Bernstein's Wonderful Town is now top contender.

INTERVIEW HI-LIGHTS...The writing Tennessee Williams and the speaking T.W. are persons apart, Rice,Post,concluded. Sunday Times piece seemed to be written in vague and high flown terms,drama editor commented. But the playwrights stated conclusion to him that survival is only possible in those things that are tender in the human heart seems clear, or at least clearer in defining Camino Real.

' NYC Theatre News '

Debut, new comedy by Mary Drayton, postponed scheduled April 20 opening in favour of August tour before NY try...South Pacfic will move to City Center April 7...Carnival in Flanders and Can-Can rehearsing at Central Plaza,2nd Ave. ...The Moon Is Blue switches from Thur to Sun Matinee...Stage and Screen Foreign Press Club honors Porgy & Bess cast at Waldorf Astoria Brunch Mar 22...Bette Davis underwent 2nd jaw operation at NY Hospital...Stock Managers Assoc.has banned musical package shows this summer.

' Off Broadway '

Mamba's Daughters, 4th and final Equity Community Theatre production plays Dewitt Clinton Center Mar21- and Bryant Center, LI City, Mar 27-28 ...Actors Equity plan would tax each member $2 yearly to support Equity Library Theatre..."3rd Dimensions 53" showcase revue held Mar 27 at Hotel Sutton by Jean Adra...Barter, new play by Urban Nagle which won the Longmans' Green Playwrighting contest performed Mar 26-28 at Church of Resurrection, Richmond Hill, SI... LIU award for Encouragement of Actors won by Circle in Square...American Jewish repertory company being formed at Educational Alliance... Some O'Casey is better than no O'Casey, sums up Rice, Post, at hectic and cramped Current Stages production of The Plough and The Stars. Seating 50 Trio Productions plans to run play through summer. Critic noted it was an ingeniously conceived production, if not an especially skillful. Sets got more of Irish spirit than direction, while actors are Irish in name only.

' Vaudeville '

Patti Page, Bobby Sargent, Clark Brothers and Jerry Wald and Orchestra head new Paramount show... RKO Palace show starring Danny Kaye has dropped Monday performances...New Radio City Music Hall show opens Mar 26 with classic "Glory of Easter" pageant, plus "Rainbow" revue.

BROADWAY GRIPE BOX

"Gripes" against critics, general/specific, invited. Identity will be held confidential, but each letter must be signed. Best gripe of week, in opinion of editor, will receive a gift of a new theatre book.

PRIZE WINNER- Critics who travel to "dog towns" to view tryouts of shows, and then base their NY review on how the show was in its formative period were labeled unfair by veteran stage manager.

Methods of picking critics is major gripe of a magazine editor. Everyone assumes theatre critics have training in their job, griper notes, but actually theatre experience in the main is lacking in most critics. Result is that they are unable to fairly judge acting and directing. This hardly helps the theatre when it is strongly crying out for improvement in these departments.

REBUTTAL: Watts, Post, explains to CD griper, an out of town editor, that he hates Hollywood for the way it snatches rising young talent from the NY Theatre. Critic is also suspicious of what it so often does to promising skills. He doubts if most of its alleged glamour girls know or care anything about acting. Watts tries to judge the Hollywood refugees on basis of what they do when he sees them on stage, he concludes.

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